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September 18, 2002

Ventura County LAFCo
800 S. Victoria Ave.
Ventura, CA 93009

**Subject: Adoption of Criteria Regarding Sphere of Influence Amendments or Service
Agreements for School Sites**

Recommendations:

- 1) Approve in-concept adopting the attached Criteria by inclusion in the Commissioner's Handbook.
- 2) Direct Staff to return to the Commission with the necessary Resolution and revised Commissioner's Handbook for formal adoption by the Commission.

Background:

As veteran Commissioners may recall, LAFCo has in the past been asked to approve City Sphere of Influence and Boundary changes for the purpose of development of a public school. The most recent being the Juan Soria School proposed for annexation to the City of Oxnard, the application for which was denied by LAFCo. Such requests pose difficult public policy challenges for LAFCo and the affected city and school district.

In the interest of seeking to prevent such conflicts between school districts' needs for new facilities and LAFCo's mandate to follow State law and generally assure that agency boundary changes are logical and orderly, a number of public officials began to address the issue. Initial meetings took place with County Superintendent of Schools Chuck Weis, Oxnard Mayor Manuel Lopez, Moorpark Mayor Patrick Hunter, Moorpark Unified School District Superintendent Frank DePasquale, Oxnard High School District Superintendent Bill Studt, and me.

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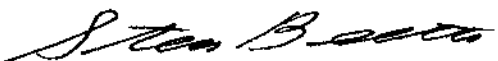
Subsequently, County Superintendent Weis and I organized a series of two public forums on balancing school development and open space preservation. The meetings were held last fall, and were well attended by city, state, and school district officials, farmers, developers, citizens, and local interest groups. Suggestions were offered for actions that could be taken by cities and school districts to assure that the need for new school facilities is addressed in a logical, planned method. Measures were identified that the cities and school districts could take to maximize their ability to accommodate student growth within existing Spheres of Influence and Urban Growth Boundaries and to minimize conflict with open space and agriculture.

Following these public forums, Superintendent Weis and I met with several school district superintendents to review drafts of the attached criteria. It was our collective objective that LAFCo adopt and use these criteria in evaluating applications for Sphere of Influence or boundary changes, or extraterritorial service agreements. I recommend adopting them as "Criteria to be Considered by LAFCo" rather than as findings or mandatory application submittal requirements. The criteria are not intended to yield a conclusive "yes" or "no" outcome on an application before LAFCo, but rather, to assist and inform LAFCo's decision-making process. The burden would be upon the applicant to provide evidence in support of the issues addressed in the criteria. Applicants for these projects should be provided with the criteria, and I will have them distributed to all school districts in the county upon adoption.

Actual adoption of revisions to the Commissioner's Handbook must be done by resolution, therefore my recommendation is, if the Commission conceptually supports adoption of the Criteria, to direct staff to prepare the necessary resolution and documents for adoption at a future meeting.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at 654-2703.

Cordially,



Steve Bennett

Attachment

Cc: Superintendent Chuck Weis

Criteria for LAFCO to consider when asked to approve a Sphere of Influence boundary change or out of agency service agreement for siting a school outside of an existing City Sphere of Influence.

Have the city and the school district engaged in good faith, collaborative long range planning for school sites?

Has a bonafide school site committee, made up of city and school officials been meeting to engage in discussions and long range planning? Is this dialogue ongoing?

Does the city discuss all major development proposals with the school district?

Does the city have a policy of considering school capacity and location when reviewing major development proposals and long range plans?

Does an official inventory of all potential sites exist? Has it been made public, reviewed, and analyzed?

Do the City General Plan and specific plans include adequate and appropriate school locations?

How much development has occurred in the last five years and has school siting been addressed in this development?

Is the city considering expansions of the Sphere or city urban growth boundary (UGB) in the next few years that would make this proposed expansion of the boundary unnecessary?

Has the school district exhausted options within the existing Sphere or UGB?

Does the school district have a long-range facility plan?

Has the school district prepared an inventory and evaluation of all district-owned facilities?

Has the school district considered joint use facilities with other entities, cities, park districts etc?

Has the school district evaluated all undeveloped land within the City Sphere of Influence and UGB?

After consideration of the safety and health of the children, has the school district considered asking for any appropriate exceptions from State school size guidelines?

Has the school district considered and eliminated multi-story school buildings as an option?

Have overall planning issues been addressed?

Are there unique safety and health concerns that should be identified to LAFCO?

Is the proposed new school site growth inducing?

Does the proposal adversely affect agriculture, or does it provide buffers?

Is the proposed site the best site available when considering logical and orderly city growth and adopted greenbelts?

Is the affected city willing to support expanding the urban boundary to accommodate the development site, including asking for a citizen's vote if necessary?

If a vote is not successful, does the school district still believe the school must be sited outside the existing urban boundary?